

science. Whilst a cautious and careful investigator, he was also an intrepid thinker, and has led the van in some of the most abstruse and difficult regions of physical and metaphysical inquiry. Of his services to our Society, it is needless to speak; they are fresh in the memory of us all, and testify to his courageous devotion to truth.

The following extract from the obituary notice of Professor Balfour Stewart which appeared in *Nature* will be read with interest, as it is from the pen of the distinguished Professor of Physics in the University of Edinburgh, Professor P. G. Tait :—

“In the genial Manchester Professor the scientific world has lost not only an excellent teacher of physics, but one of its ablest and most original investigators. He was trained according to the best methods of the last generation of experimentalists, in which scrupulous accuracy was constantly associated with genuine scientific honesty. Men such as he are never numerous; but they are the true leaders of scientific progress: *directly*, by their own contributions, *indirectly*, though (with rare exceptions) even more substantially, by handing on to their students the choicest traditions of a past age, mellowed by time and enriched from the experience of the present. The name of Stewart will long be remembered for more than one striking addition to our knowledge; but his patient and reverent spirit will continue to impress for good the mind and the work of all who have come under its influence.”

In conclusion, Professor Tait adds a personal testimony, which the writer of this notice can heartily endorse :—

“Of the man himself I cannot trust myself to speak. What I *could* say will easily be divined by those who knew him intimately; and to those who did not know him I am unwilling to speak in terms which, to them, would certainly appear exaggerated.”

W. F. B.

SPURIOUS MEDIUMSHIP.

By S. J. DAVEY.

On September 30th, 1887, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, and the *Newcastle Daily Leader*, contained reports of a private view of “Slate-writing,” given by a person calling himself “Mr. Wilson.” From a careful perusal of these reports, it would be difficult to form any other conclusion than that the phenomena of Mr. Wilson, “the most renowned psychographic medium of America,” are identical with the tricks of Dr. Henry Slade. That Dr. Slade should have elected to visit England under a disguised name is not surprising, when past circumstances in his history are taken into consideration. Apart from the prosecution by Professor Ray Lankester at Bow-street Police-court, there are other records connected with his career that seriously compromise his pretensions to “mediumship.”

In 1883, according to the *Belleville (Ontario) Intelligencer*, Dr. Henry Slade was exposed in a most complete manner, and the mark of his guilt in the shape of a prepared slate was retained by his exposers. He then confessed his crime, subsequently pleading, however, that "the gentlemen had made him drunk." On being allowed to leave the town of Belleville, and having made good his escape, he circulated a report that the exposure had not taken place with the genuine Dr. Slade, but with some one falsely bearing his name.

The *New York Sunday Times*, of July 5th, 1885, contains a noteworthy exposure by a lady Spiritualist, and again in the *Boston Herald*, February, 1886, an article appeared entitled, *Exposure of a Writing Medium. The celebrated Dr. Slade comes to grief in Weston, W. Va., writes upon slates which lie upon his knees under the table, and moves tables and chairs with his toes.* It is further recorded that Mr. E. S. Barrett, a Weston Spiritualist, publicly denounced Slade before a concourse of people, in the Justice Hall, and in the medium's presence explained how his imposture had been detected.

Passing over numerous other exposures, the *Report of the Seybert Commission*, recently published in America, devotes upwards of 20 pages to a discussion of the artifices employed by Dr. Henry Slade during his séances before the Commissioners. It has been alleged that although Dr. Slade has been clearly exposed on many occasions, it is possible that his recent performances are perfectly genuine. It is, however, worthy of note, that there exists a complete exposure of the fraudulent methods used by "Mr. Wilson" at a private séance he recently held at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

I have personally discussed this exposure with the medium. He explained that the allegations of trickery on his part must be false, since he suffered from paralysis on the right side. His subsequent behaviour, however, betrayed the absurdity of the excuse.

Some amount of prominence was recently given in the pages of *Light* to the report of "Mr. Wilson's" performance as given in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, September 30th, 1887.

At first sight the record is "a fair one to all seeming," but for the benefit of those interested in the question, I reproduce another report of the same sitting from the *Newcastle Daily Leader* of September 30th, 1887.

For my part, after a careful comparison of these reports, I feel that the difficulty of estimating the value of human testimony under certain peculiar conditions, is well demonstrated by the writers. I have italicised some of the points, consideration of which will, it seems to me, prove instructive.

NEWCASTLE DAILY CHRONICLE, September 30th, 1887.

No. 1.

SPIRITUALISM IN NEWCASTLE.

[A] Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Wilson, "psychographic medium," gave a select slate-writing séance at his apartments in Newcastle, to which representatives of the Newcastle Press were invited.

[B] Mr. Wilson states that the manifestations given by him are given under the control of Dr. Davis, who was a physician at Manhattanville, now New York, above 100 years ago, and that he is also controlled by other spirits. Our reporter gives the following account of what took place :—

[C] The slates used were sent direct on Wednesday from the North of England School Furnishing Company, and the table at which the visitors and the medium were seated was an ordinary deal table, about three feet by three.

[D] The parties having joined hands, silence reigned for a few minutes. It was broken by the medium, who stated that spirits were then in the room. This was confirmed by a Spiritualist present, who, being a clairauditor and clairvoyant, stated that he saw the spirit of the venerable Wesley present, and that he also saw a gentlemanly-looking man in a frock coat, and otherwise beautifully dressed, standing by the side of the medium. The latter remarked, "Yes, that is Dr. Davis." "Will you consent to write for us?" was the question put to the spirits, and there was an immediate knock underneath the table. The next question was, "How many are present?" and the correct answer was rendered by a number of knocks.

[E] *The medium then proceeded to arrange for slate-writing. A couple of slates, which were first of all critically examined by those present, were placed together, one on the top of the other, a piece of chemical pencil, about a quarter-of-an-inch in length, being placed between them. The slates were entirely new, quite dry, and absolutely free from marks or writing. They were held at arm's length by the medium, in the full light of day, and placed with one end on the shoulder of a gentleman present. Meanwhile, the company had entered into a conversation on Spiritualism, in the course of which the doubts of the public, and even the shams that had been perpetrated in the name of Spiritualism, were discussed.*

[F] *The medium stated in the course of this debate that he had often to complain of the suspicions aroused in certain minds regarding manifestations such as that taking place that afternoon, but he hoped to show to those present that there was no trickery in what he was about to do, but that it was the work of powers beyond him.*

[G] *While he was talking, there was, to the astonishment of everyone present, the sound of vigorous writing between the slates. It was impossible that the medium could be writing, as both his hands were to be seen, and it was equally certain that the sound of the writing proceeded directly from between the slates. It proceeded rapidly for a time; there was the sound of a stroke being made, and then again the writing went on as rapidly as before. "There are several doing it," was the remark of the medium, and the finish of what was evidently another stroke was supplemented by a knock indicating that the writing was done. The slates were removed from the shoulder of the gentleman on which they had rested, were laid on the table, and one was*

removed from the other. When this had been done, the under slate was found to be covered with expressions, divided by almost straight lines. The wording of these expressions was as follows :—

Un homme sage est au-dessus de toutes les injures qu'on peut lui dire.—
L. de Mond.

The best answer that can be made to such outrages is moderation and patience.—Dr. Davis.

Davis.—Sie haben nicht unrecht.—J. S.

[H] Quanto sinio felici di avere un tempo evoi bello la preyo de mui rispetti a tutta la di lei cara famiyia.—Z. E.

[I] The writing was of a good kind, and it was clearly in different styles of caligraphy. The first and second sentences had a direct bearing on the conversation that had previously taken place, and referred evidently to the part where the suspicions of the outside world had been referred to. Other slate manifestations followed. At times the hand of the medium shook as if he could scarcely hold the slate, so great, stated he, was the spirit influence upon it, and at another time it was removed from his hand under the table and transferred to the hand of a person sitting opposite.

[J] A question, "What profession are two of the inquirers present?" brought the words on the slate, "They are all present." This, however, was not the right answer, and the slate, after being under the table again, held nearly fast to the corner by the finger and thumb of the medium, returned with the word "Pressmen," which was correct.

[K] *The question was written, it should be explained, by one of the sitters, and was handed to the medium, with the writing downwards, so that he could not possibly see it, or know what it was.*

[L] While these manifestations were going on, a heavy iron bed suddenly shifted its position to the extent of about three feet, a chair was thrown from a position near the wall in the direction of the table, and raps were experienced on their legs and knees by the sitters. One of the Spiritualists present, after throwing his hands up in an agitated way, suddenly had his eyes closed, and stated that he could not, despite all his efforts, open them again. He stated, however, that Wesley and other spirits were still in the room, and that he was asked by one to state that these manifestations were given by the spirits to people on earth in order to prove that mind could never die, and was eternal. He was also asked to thank the gentlemen of the Press for their presence, and to state that the spirits had often received great favours at their hands. One of these gentlemen, he said, was both a healing and a seeing medium. When this question, however, was put to the spirits, the answer on the slates was, "He is not a medium," and with respect to another gentleman present the words written were, "He can be a medium."

[M] The slate was taken from the medium's hands, and transferred to a person in the room, but the latter, it is only fair to state, expressed the belief that he could transfer the slate, if he placed it on his foot, to the medium at the opposite side of the table, and succeeded in doing so at the second and third attempts.

[N] The slate had been previously transferred to persons seated in a position that it seemed impossible for the medium either with his legs or his hands to reach. A most remarkable thing in connection with the proceedings

was that, when any of the sitters put their hands under the table, a strong current of air was felt—a current that could not be perceived at any other part of the room. The manifestations, in short, seemed in several instances to be beyond the power of the medium, and it is equally certain—for the visitors were particular in examining everything—that Mr. Wilson had no confederates whatever in the room. Everything was done in open daylight, and the removal of the bed and the chair, together with the writing on the inside of a slate, covered with another, and held openly to view, contributed considerably to baffle the thoughts of the non-Spiritualists present. There was mystery in nearly all they saw and heard, and, unless the doctrine of Spiritualism has more in it than the majority of people allow, they were unable to form any conclusion whatever for the things they had witnessed. Whether the results were due to natural or supernatural means, the sitting, which lasted about an hour and a-half, was full of interest to all present. It is the intention of Mr. Wilson, we believe, to remain in Newcastle for a few days longer, and any communications for him are to be addressed to Mr. W. H. Robinson, bookseller, The Market, Newcastle, secretary of the Spiritual Evidence Society.

NEWCASTLE DAILY LEADER, *September 30th*, 1887.

No. 2.

VISIT OF A PSYCHOGRAPHIC MEDIUM TO NEWCASTLE.—INTERESTING
MANIFESTATIONS.

A "Press view" was given yesterday by the most renowned psychographic medium of America, now travelling *incognito*, and at present on a short visit to Newcastle. [A] The Spiritualistic power of "Mr. Wilson" is in slate-writing, and those who would see the manifestations must be introduced, as we were introduced, through Mr. W. H. Robinson, the secretary of the Spiritual Evidence Society, at his bookstall in the Market. The latter, like the worthy alderman and presiding deity at the Art Gallery, has received "the light," and "sees visions" and "dreams dreams"; they know what they know. If a Chippendale or a Huxley would be equally knowing, here is a grand opportunity, under such guides, for studying really astounding phenomena. There were no pretentious expectations on the part of the medium: True, it came out casually that his travels had been world-wide, that he had been at one time with the Czar in St. Petersburg, and at another with the settlers in the backwoods of Australia, [B] always, as appeared, accompanied by his "familiar" or influencing power, the spirit of a Dr. Davis, to which time and distance were as nothing. He had died more than 100 years ago in Manhattanville (now New York), and, by long practice through the medium, was an expert in manifesting by writing. Mr. Wilson is an elderly gentleman, of English, French, and Scotch descent; that is to say, his maternal grandfather was a Scotch general in France and his father an Englishman. He survives all his nearest kinsfolk, as well as two wives, to both of whom he was so attached that their shades are frequently with him, and the secretary of the Spiritual Evidence Society had scarcely sat down before he, being a "seer," startled us by the visions present to him. The saintly John Wesley was there an interested observer, and one he described and named was identified as a wife of the medium.

The two strangers saw nothing, although both the medium and secretary felt the "influence" to be strong, the room being perfectly peopled by ghostly visitors! In this pleasant condition of affairs the strangers sat down at one side of a square deal table, which was enlarged by the raising of two wings on supports, while the medium sat at the head and the secretary at the foot.

[C] Several new slates, freshly imported from a shop in town, were laid down, with tiny fragments of slate pencil, made square, as was explained, to keep the writing material from rolling off the slate.

[D] Our quartette formed, presumably, a "charmed circle," with their hands on the table, and immediately tappings were heard on a slate, rappings under the table, on the floor, and on the backs of the chairs, and specific knocks made by the medium, such as with the close and open hand, were exactly imitated. Asked as to how many spirits were prepared to manifest, the slate tapped out "four." All this time the medium was restless, and appeared to be suffering more or less from the control which, by-the-way, he claimed to have had all his life. He believed the influence of the spirits had been born with him, as his parents were gifted as "seers."

[E] *Chatting went on quite freely at the table, while the medium seemed to be forcing a slate with a bit of pencil under the leaf of the table. Failing in doing this at the time, another slate was placed on the top of it, frame to frame, with the little bit of pencil between. It was held over the left shoulder of the writer in his and the medium's right hands, the left hands remaining in the circuit on the table.*

[G] *Almost immediately the sound of slate pencil work was heard between the slates so held, and whenever the medium lifted his left hand from the table the influence seemed broken and the sound of writing ceased, to recommence immediately on the hand being replaced. The action was like the elimination of the safety fuse in an electric circuit, the psychic force, or mysterious power being gone. A tap on the slate informed the medium that the task, or rather request, was done, and on opening the slates the side of one was seen to be covered with writing, as even as if it had been done on ruled lines. According to Pope—*

Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banished lover, or some captive maid—

but here was a use little dreamt of in that poet's philosophy. It had been stated that there were four spirits prepared to manifest, and there were the examples of their "handiwork." The first was in French:—

Un homme sage est audessus de toutes les injures qu'on peut lui dire.—L. de Mond.

[The wise man is above all the injurious things said of him.]

The next paragraph was in bold English, and seemed to bear out the assurance of the secretary that the viewless apparitions in the room were much interested in our conversation. It was:—

The best answer that can be made to such outrages is moderation and patience.—Dr. Davis.

Again the cosmopolitan character of the assembly was manifested, and a German had his say, although the writing was not in the native characters:—

Davis—Sie haben nicht unrecht.—J. S.

[Davis—You are not wrong.]

The fourth was in a language we were not musician enough to understand, but as Artemus Ward would say, it was "somethin' to this effek":—

[H] *Quanto sinio felici di avere un tempo evoi bello. La preyo de mici rispetti a tutta la di lei cara famigliaa.*—Z. E.

[L] The slate-writing feat appeared to have excited the unseen calligraphists, for on a sudden a large heavy bedstead in a corner of the room was turned half-way round; the secretary was agitated, and, saying they had "sealed his eyes," appeared to fall into a kind of trance; the writer felt like a hand grip his right knee, and looking at his neighbour discovered the latter turning an equivocal look at him as much as to say "none of your larks," yet our hands were all on the table. Then the chairs on which we sat got shifted a bit by no visible means, an empty chair on the opposite side of the table was turned round, and altogether things were, for a little, somewhat lively and pleasant. The medium ever and anon cried out suddenly, as if he had received a shock from an electric battery, yet we, the strangers, felt in no way discomposed, and nothing happened when we ventured upon a little laugh—quite natural and not at all hysterical, it may be explained—on our own account.

[M] The medium, in attempting to get more writing under the table, this time said he felt the power pulling the slate from him, and passing out of his hand it emerged at the opposite corner and was impelled with some force back towards him, both his hands being above the table. The secretary and the other observer had it passed to them, and before receiving it, oh! gruesome to relate, affirmed that they each felt as if a chill breath—"the cold wind rushing" spoken to by Mrs. Hemans, perhaps—was being blown upon their hands! All the same, one of the strangers fancied the slate might be so passed on the foot and tried it, but no such movement could be detected on the part of the medium. We were asked to write a question unseen by the medium on the slate with a view to an answer.

[J] The question was, "What is the profession of the inquirers at the table?" After some little time there was writing on the slate which read, "All of you."

[K] *Another trial, but it is only fair to say after the question had been told to the medium, it was correctly answered.* The most mysterious part of the séance, which took place, of course, in broad daylight, was the writing between the slates. A bit of chair-turning awoke the secretary from his trance, and relieved his closed eyes, after which "Good-bye" was written on the slate, and the extraordinary phenomena ended. We asked the medium why the writing could not take place above as well as below the table, and in our clear view? His answer was that the human eye, the reflex of the mind and will power, had an influence which destroyed that of the manifesting spirits, and he illustrated this with the case of a bird fascinated by the eyes of a serpent. There was a vital power transmitted that could not be seen, it could only be felt! This is the latest if not last and great mystery, and, much puzzled, we quitted the scene.

In report No. 1 [C] we are told:—"The slates used were sent direct on Wednesday from the North of England School Furnishing Company." No. 2 [C] says:—"Several new slates, freshly imported from a shop in

town, were laid down." It appears probable from the above statement that the slates had previously been sent direct to the medium. If we compare the statements, marked [E] and [G] we find that reporter No. 2 made a note of an important point not recorded by reporter No. 1. We find that "chatting went on quite freely at the table, while the medium seemed to be forcing a slate with a bit of pencil *under* the leaf of the table. Failing in doing this at the time, another slate was placed on the top of it, frame to frame." This does not appear such a straightforward proceeding as that described by the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* reporter. Again, reporter No. 1, in the passage marked [I], remarks that some sentences in the long message had a direct bearing on the conversation that had recently taken place, but it is noteworthy that the medium himself took a leading part in this very conversation.

Reporter No. 1 in passages [J] and [K], mentions that the medium could not possibly see or know what the question was, and he alludes to the subsequent correct answer, and *actually* omits to record the important fact, mentioned by reporter No. 2, that it was not until the question *was told to the medium that it was correctly answered*.

[M] It does not appear that a special experiment was devised to exclude the possibility of slates being moved under the table by the medium's foot, after the discovery made by one of the sitters that with practice he could repeat himself one of the movements. We are simply told that in previous experiments the slate had been moved in a way that seemed impossible.

During a subsequent séance at Newcastle-on-Tyne, "Mr. Wilson" was detected in the act of moving a slate in the manner indicated. At the time he was wearing a sock cut down so as to admit of a free working of the toes of his right foot, which, by reason of his wearing a low shoe, could be easily brought into play. This method is well known as being somewhat peculiar to Slade, and there is evidence to show that he has been detected on several occasions in its employment.

"Mr. Wilson" informed me that he was the originator of "Slate-writing"! I believe this statement to be correct. In conclusion, I may remark that I addressed a letter to the Editors of the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* and *Newcastle Daily Leader*, in which I stated my conviction that the "phenomena of 'Mr. Wilson,'" as recorded in the above-mentioned papers, were identical with the tricks of Dr. Henry Slade, and I requested the publication of my statement to that effect. In reply I learnt that "my surmise was believed to be correct." That Dr. Slade has a repertoire of adroit as well as barefaced methods of imposition seems universally admitted by Spiritualists and sceptics, hence it is right that the public should be

warned in regard to the so-called "spirit manifestations" of "Mr. Wilson."

S. J. DAVEY.

CASE SUPPLIED TO THE LITERARY COMMITTEE.

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From the Rev. W. S. Grignon, of The Grove, Pluckley, Kent.

April 5th, 1887.

I send you herewith some details of a first-hand record of two apparitions of the same deceased person to two persons, relatives, at intervals of two to four years after the death, apparently on the same spot. The case came to my knowledge through the uncle of a pupil now with me, a retired colonel of R.E., to whom the two percipients stand in the relationship of aunt and uncle's wife respectively. Through him I sent some questions to these two ladies, and with the replies received a letter from one of them, Mrs. J., from which it appeared that she was an acquaintance of my own, mother of two boys who were under me at Felsted. I knew her late husband also very well. She gives reasons, not flimsy and fanciful, but practically connected with the past and present ownership of the house in question, why great trouble and annoyance might arise for herself and her sister-in-law if the facts were to "leak out" in connection with the real names, and binds me not to disclose them. I am compelled, therefore, to ask you to rely upon my word for the following account of the parties concerned. The initials which I have given are not the correct initials of the persons described. Mr. J. was a professional man of high character and good position in a country town of no great size, which I call X. "Miss R. J." is his sister, a lady now far advanced in life. "Mrs. J. S. J." is his widow—a sensible woman—not, I think, likely to be fanciful and credulous in such a matter. The father of my friend, Colonel B., of the R.E., married a Miss J., sister of Miss R. J. and Mr. J. above mentioned. Miss F. B. is his sister (Colonel B.'s), now deceased. The old lady who is supposed to have appeared was the mother of Miss R. J. and of Mr. J. I made such inquiries as occurred to me, but can send more, if there be any questions which you would care to put.

WILLIAM S. GRIGNON.

STATEMENT OF MISS R. J.

After two years since the death of my mother, when all sad recollections were gone, I was walking one day, at 10 a.m., downstairs by myself. All of a sudden I heard a kind of scuttle, and turned round to see what it was, and there saw distinctly my late mother coming out of her morning-room, dressed as usual, black silk dress, large white apron and collar, white stockings and black shoes. I watched for a moment or two, and saw her turn to go up a pair of stairs to her late bedroom, when all of a sudden her head went off and the apparition disappeared. I related the fact at the time, and it was considered nonsense. I only saw it once, and hoped I should not again.